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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6318
INFO RUCNDMI/HUMANITARIAN DEMINING COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/I, NEA/I/PM
DEPT ALSO FOR PM/WRA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KHDP](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DEMINING IRAQ: HIGH-WATER MARK OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3190
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2381 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. (U) Deputy Minister of Environment Kamal Latif Hussein marked the completion of a humanitarian landmine clearance project in Baghdad's "Army Canal" January 23 with leaders of the Iraq Mine and UXO Clearance Organization (IMCO), an Iraqi NGO and U.S.-grantee. National television networks covered the event and, taking cues from IMCO and Deputy MinEnv, hailed the release of the cleared land as a successful example of public-private partnership that would "save children's lives" as well as draw investors to the area. IMCO assisted the Iraqi Army with the project and continues operations at three other sites. PM/WRA helped create IMCO in 1993 and has since supported it and a handful of other mine action organizations in Iraq.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Today, IMCO is conducting demining operations under the direction of the MOEnv's Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), which exercises full legal authority. The change has been dramatic: IMCO, only six months ago, faced legal action to jail its director, Zahim Mutar. Furthermore, an Iraqi injunction on demining activity had barred IMCO and other humanitarian as well as commercial organizations from conducting demining operations (ref B). This month, however, demining resumed in earnest, and the GOI has publicly embraced IMCO. Topping it off, the media trumpeted IMCO's "civil society" leadership as a boon to both the Iraqi people's safety and the country's economic development.

[1](#)3. (SBU) COMMENT: In terms of the Embassy's and PM/WRA's goals, this public ceremony also marked the completion of the 180-degree turn-around that we set for mine action in Iraq (ref A). When Post reported on the resolution of the demining ban and on IMCO's approval to operate, we noted that the final benchmark of progress would be met when IMCO once again was able to remove landmines or unexploded ordnance (UXO) in the course of a humanitarian project, which it now has done. END COMMENT.
HILL